

VZCZCXYZ8939
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSB #0175/01 0651253
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 051253Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2542
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1796
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1922
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0501
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1199
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1556
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1978
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4409
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHMFIS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1049
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000175

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL,
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2018
TAGS: PGOV KDEM ASEC ZI
SUBJECT: MAKONI IN FULL CAMPAIGN MODE

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) Simba Makoni kicked off his campaign last weekend with a rally in Bulawayo and an endorsement from ZANU-PF insider Dumiso Dabengwa. Ibbo Mandaza, one of Makoni's principal supporters, is hopeful that General Solomon Mujuru, a Makoni backer, will also come out publicly in the coming days. Although a recent opinion poll showed Makoni trailing President Robert Mugabe and MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, Mandaza claims that internal Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) documents show Makoni's support at over 50 percent and growing. Mandaza, who claims the Makoni forces have substantial support within ZANU-PF structures, including the CIO and military, believes the key to defeating Mugabe is containment of vote rigging. He acknowledges that a united front with Tsvangirai would maximize chances of winning, but Tsvangirai has so far rebuffed meetings to discuss a common

SIPDIS
agenda. The biggest obstacles facing Makoni, according to Mandaza, are ZANU-PF harassment and lack of funds. Mandaza expresses confidence Makoni will win, but Plan B is to take over the party after the election. END SUMMARY.

Campaign Kickoff

¶12. (C) Makoni kicked off his campaign with a rally reportedly attended by about 10,000 people in Bulawayo on March 1. He held a smaller rally in the high-density suburb of Highfield in Harare on March 2. In Bulawayo, ZANU-PF Politburo member Dumiso Dabengwa publicly endorsed Makoni. Dabengwa was the first high-level ZANU-PF official to make

his support public. Mandaza told us he was hopeful that General Solomon Mujuru will soon follow Dabengwa. According to Mandaza, Makoni has hit the road and will campaign full time between now and the March 29 elections.

Support Growing

¶3. (C) We discussed with Mandaza a poll conducted by the Mass Public Opinion Institute of Zimbabwe between February 18 and February 22 which showed 30 percent support for Mugabe, 28 percent for Tsvangirai, and 12 percent for Makoni (30 percent declined to state a preference.) Mandaza was dismissive; the poll was taken before Dabengwa announced his support, and the CIO believed that Makoni had over 50 percent support which was growing. Mandaza maintained that Makoni has substantial support from within the CIO and the military, including top generals. He said he and Makoni both maintain substantial contacts within ZANU-PF and regularly received CIO intelligence reports.

Containment of Rigging

¶4. (C) Mandaza wryly stated that electoral rigging is the biggest electoral obstacle to defeating Mugabe, and that he and other Makoni supporters, who have long histories with ZANU-PF, are well-acquainted with how it is accomplished. The primary areas of concern were the voter rolls, the polling centers where votes are miscounted and misreported, and the electoral command center where votes from around the country are tallied and announced.

¶5. (C) As to the voter rolls, Mandaza said he had obtained one-half of the national rolls from the Registrar of Voters and soon would have the other half. He had employed an analyst to compare the rolls with death certificates in order to weed out ghost voters. Mandaza was not concerned about reports of voters failing to register; while there were, in his opinion, isolated instances, the reported high levels of registration, particularly after Makoni announced his candidacy, belied this.

¶6. (C) Mandaza said it was critical to have observers at all polling stations to prevent fraud in the tabulation and reporting process. He was skeptical the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network (ZESN) was up to the task. In particular, he was suspicious of the independence of ZESN's director. He had had talks with the Christian Alliance, which he believed was independent, and was willing, to the extent possible to undertake the responsibility. (Comment: We agree that the Christian Alliance could function well as observers. USAID has had preliminary discussions with the organization regarding observation in conjunction with ZESN. The Christian Alliance told us it could provide about 1,000 observers. At least 11,000 will be needed to man all the polling stations. ZESN, with assistance from other civic society organizations, has indicated it will be able to do so. End Comment.) As to the election command center run by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Mandaza said several Commission members are supportive of Makoni, and he hoped this could control ZEC machinations.

A United Front?

¶7. (C) Mandaza acknowledged that a united front would maximize the chance of defeating Mugabe. He said he had unsuccessfully attempted to meet with Tsvangirai--Tsvangirai had canceled several appointments--but had maintained contact with a number of MDC members. He believed that Tsvangirai had run and failed, and no longer commanded widespread support. Therefore, Tsvangirai should act patriotically and subordinate himself to Makoni. (Comment. Under Zimbabwe

electoral law, a presidential candidate must withdraw at least 21 days before the election. Therefore, if an alliance were formed after this week, both Tsvangirai and Makoni would remain on the ballot. An alliance is unlikely, since Makoni and Tsvangirai feel they are much stronger than the other.
End Comment.)

Obstacles

¶18. (C) Despite press reports that South African businesses were funding Makoni's campaign, Mandaza said that he himself had provided most of the financial support. He added that the campaign needed money for campaign materials and asked if the U.S. could provide such support. He confirmed that London-based businessman Nkosana Moyo was consulting with the Makoni forces and trying to raise money.

¶19. (C) The government was harassing Makoni and his campaign team according to Mandaza. Mandaza had arranged for materials to be printed in South Africa, and the government was preventing their importation. The police had interrupted the Highfield rally on March 2 claiming that Makoni had surpassed the (non-existent) time limit for the rally. But many government officials, including police, were anti-Mugabe and Mandaza thought Makoni would be able to hold unimpeded rallies and otherwise function. He also expected that as the election approached, access to the media would ease, as it has in the past for the opposition before elections.

Looking to the Future

¶10. (C) Mandaza averred that Makoni had strong support, particularly in Matabeleland, Manicaland, Midlands, and Masvingo. He conceded that Tsvangirai would be strong in Harare. A key for Makoni was to make inroads in the Mashonaland provinces. He believed that Makoni's support was growing in these areas as people became aware of his candidacy. Finally, he expressed confidence in a Makoni victory. But if rigging prevented this, ZANU-PF was fracturing, the 1987 Unity Accord was dead, and Mugabe would not last long after the elections.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Without sophisticated polling, it is difficult to measure Makoni's strength. While the MPOI poll may be understating support for Makoni, Mandaza is almost certainly overestimating it. It is clear that within ZANU-PF there is substantial opposition to Mugabe and corresponding support for Makoni. With limited time until the election it is uncertain how successful Makoni will be in using his institutional support to gain votes. The Dabengwa defection was significant and will certainly help him in Matabeleland. Dabengwa is a war veteran and lieutenant of Joshua Nkomo who was imprisoned by Mugabe and later supported the Unity Accord between ZANU-PF and ZAPU. Further public defections, for example by Solomon Mujuru, would further split the party and provide support for Makoni.

¶12. (C) Many former supporters, including in the rural areas, are turning against Mugabe and some political observers believe that he will be unable to win 51 percent. But ZANU-PF is going all out to achieve a victory. The money printing presses are working full time to keep--to the extent possible--the lights on and the water flowing, and to increase salaries for police and military. Also, the party is handing out agricultural equipment in the rural areas. Predictions of a runoff would be premature. At this point, a runoff is unlikely absent containment of the ZANU-PF rigging machinery.

¶12. (C) The Dabengwa defection is a public manifestation of what everyone knows is interneceine ZANU-PF conflict, and, in

light of a crumbling economy and infrastructure, we believe Mandaza is right in his assessment that ZANU-PF will continue to fracture. If Mugabe wins the election, it is not unreasonable to believe that those in ZANU-PF who now covertly oppose him will grow in number and ultimately force him out. The question would appear to be less "if" than "when." And the new leader (of a reformist ZANU-PF) could still be Simba Makoni, who would be respected from within the party for having had the courage to publicly oppose and run against Mugabe.

DHANANI